



# Montgomery County Council

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*For Immediate Release*

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## **Montgomery Council to Consider Cameras to Record Passing of Stopped School Buses**

*Also on Tues., Nov. 29: Action on Wheaton Plan, Revised  
Council Boundaries; MCPS Employee Benefit Funds Report*

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ROCKVILLE, Md., November 28, 2011—The Montgomery County Council on Tuesday, Nov. 29, will introduce Bill 37-11 that would allow for the installation of cameras on County school buses for the purpose of monitoring vehicles that illegally pass stopped buses.

The bill, which is cosponsored by Council President Valerie Ervin, Council Vice President Roger Berliner and Councilmembers Phil Andrews and Craig Rice, will be introduced during the Council's weekly morning session beginning at 9:30 a.m. in the Third Floor Council Hearing Room of the Council Office Building at 100 Maryland Ave. in Rockville.

The morning session, and two public hearings in the afternoon, will be televised live by County Cable Montgomery (CCM—Cable Channel 6 on Comcast and RCN, Channel 30 on Verizon). The broadcast also will be available via streaming through the County Web site at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov). It will be rebroadcast on Friday, Dec. 2, starting at 9 p.m. The meeting with MACo representatives is open to the public, but will not be televised.

This will be Council President Ervin's final full session presiding over the Council. Her one-year term will expire on Tuesday, Dec. 6. On that day, the Council will elect a new president and a new vice president to one-year terms.

Bill 37-11 would authorize the County's Chief of Police, after consulting with the Board of Education, to install cameras on Montgomery County Public School buses to monitor traffic. In a Nov. 22 memo to the Board of Education, Council President Ervin asked the board to support the bill.

"The goal of this legislation is to change the behavior of drivers who currently ignore traffic laws intended to keep our students safe while traveling on school buses," wrote Council President Ervin. "As the Council's representative on the County's Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, I am sponsoring this bill because I believe it is a natural outgrowth of our Pedestrian Safety Initiative and our Safe Routes to School program."

The bill would implement Maryland State Senate Bill 679, which was passed by the 2011 General Assembly and allowed for the installation of cameras on the outside of County school buses. Drivers caught on tape illegally passing a stopped school bus would be subject to a maximum civil fine of \$250. [If a school bus driver can personally identify a violator, a conviction could lead to a misdemeanor carrying a fine of up to \$1,000 and three points may be assessed to a driver's license.]

A Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) survey released in March 2011 reported that in a single day in February, 7,028 drivers overtook stopped buses in Maryland. The report stated 56.9 percent of the violators were oncoming vehicles passing the bus from the opposite direction; 37.9 percent passed the bus from behind on the driver's side; and 5.2 percent passed the bus of the side of the bus passenger door. The survey was coordinated by MSDE along with transportation directors in all 24 County school systems. Approximately 65 percent (more than 4,700) of all bus drivers statewide participated in the survey

The MSDE survey reported that 1,645 drivers in Montgomery County ignored the stop arm activated on buses when they are stopped and students are entering or leaving the bus. However, for a variety of reasons, approximately only 500 violators per year in the County are given citations for those actions.

A public hearing on Bill 37-11 is scheduled for Jan. 24.

During the morning session, the Council is also expected to take action on two issues that have been the subject of much debate and discussion over the past year.

The Council is expected to approve the Wheaton Central Business District and Vicinity Sector Plan. It also is expected to approve revised boundaries for election of the five district Councilmembers. Revisions to boundaries are spurred every 10 years, based on population trends revealed in the most recent Census.

The Council will receive a report from its Office of Legislative Oversight analyzing the revenue and expenditure trends for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) employee benefits. The Council requested the report after it approved the overall County Fiscal Year 2012 Operating Budget in May. During the budget discussions, the Council raised questions about the administration of the funds.

The report focuses on "Category 12" of the MCPS budget, which is primarily used to fund employee benefits such as retirement, health, insurance and social security for the school system.

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